The White Homestead

The Story of a House, the People who lived in it, and the Land around it.

by Louise Pettus

THE WHITE HOMESTEAD

This is the story of a plantation house, the people who have lived in the house, and the land around it. The house was built in 1831 by William Elliott White and is located in Fort Mill township of York County, South Carolina.

William Elliott White was a twenty-seven-year-old storekeeper, postmaster, and planter who needed a larger home for his growing family. He had the means to build a large home. His store and plantation prospered, and, as an only child, he had inherited a considerable sum of money and land from his parents. In addition, when his maternal uncle, Samuel Elliott, died childless in 1824, William had inherited one-third of his estate. The location he

chose for his new home was on his Uncle Samuel's land.[1]

At the age of twenty, White had married Sarah Robinson Wilson, the daughter of one of North Carolina's most distinguished families, the Rev. John Makemie Wilson and Mary "Pretty Polly" Erwin Wilson. Sarah would have the space and a proper setting for the plantings of shrubs and flowers she so loved. William Elliott White intended to create a showplace.

White made a contract with Thomas B. Hoover of Yorkville. The contract read: "The said Wm. E. White is to pay to the said Thos. B. Hoover, occasionally as it may be needed, the one half amount of his work, the other half, if not convenient to pay it when the work is done, to bear interest from that time until it is paid. Said Hoover will further, without any charge, see that the stone and brick work is done in a workmanlike manner, but is not bound so to do. The blocking for doors, windows and every other part of the building, not above expressed, to be done and

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[1]Technically, all of the land in the Fort Mill area belonged to the Catawba Indians who leased it to white settlers. Samuel Elliott's lease was inherited by him from his father, William Elliott.

included in the above prices."[2] The price of Hoover's work was $5,000, a princely sum in 1831.

There were no formally trained architects available to White. Contractors like Hoover were likely to have a book of plans showing popular styles from which the customer could choose and make variations according to the customer's taste. A Georgian manor in Yorkshire, England was chosen as the model. The plan chosen by White had been popular in the previous century in the South Carolina lowcountry but unusual for the upcountry.[3] Perhaps Sarah White made the final choice. When finished the White home closely resembled Belleview, the family home of Mrs. White's uncle, James Wilson of Morganton, North Carolina.[4]

Hoover had constructed many of Yorkville's loveliest homes[5] and had done the wood work for the

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[2]The contract was found by workmen in October-November 1911 who were hired by Leroy Springs following the death in March of his father-in-law, Samuel Elliott White.

[3]National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form. (n. d.)

[4]Belleview is still standing.

[5]The Joseph Hart Genealogical Records, McCelvey Center, York, S. C. show that Hoover constructed the Hunter House next to the courthouse and had been a builder in Yorkville at least since 1820, if not longer.

York District court house in 1824.[6] Robert Clendenin, a Yorkville lawyer, rented Hoover six pairs of brick "moles." A master mason, a slave named John, was also used.[7] So far as is known, the White Homestead is the second oldest brick structure in York County.[8]

The 1991 renovation of the house shows that the brick work in the basement is unusually good. Arches, three bricks thick, support the house. Hand-hewn oak beams measure 14 x 16 inches and the pine floor joists are 4 x 12 inches. The flooring was heart-of-pine, an attractive wood that takes a high polish. The Homestead ceilings are 12 feet tall. Workmen involved in the 1991 restoration found some termite infestation, but, on the whole, the house was sound.

The house was to be four stories, counting the basement and full attic. There was an outside kitchen, typical of southern plantation houses. There was also

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[6]Robert Leckie was called the "Architect" and did the stone work of the court house. Hoover is credited with the wood work in the Yorkville newspaper, *The Pioneer*, June 5, 1824.

[7]In July 1832 Thomas Hoover purchased "6 pr. Brick Moulds Steel--$30.02" from the estate of Clendenin. "Steel" is the 1832 term for cast iron; the United States did not yet manufacture cast iron. It has been written that the White Homestead bricks were imported from England; it was not brick but brick molds which were of English manufacture.

[8]The oldest is the Latta House which is located across the street from the York County Courthouse.

an inside kitchen, which was unusual. The inside kitchen would have been used in the winter and in inclement weather. The outside kitchen was used in warm weather. There would have been other buildings such as a smokehouse, sheds, stables, hay barns, corn cribs, and, of course, the "necessaries." There may have been a carriage house. Of these out-buildings no trace is left.

All of the interior doors were grained in imitation of rare wood. Grain painting gives pine the look of costlier timber. The technique involves applying a base coat (usually bright pink or orange) and letting it dry before drawing on the sienna or black grain with a notched leather strip, brush, or feathers. All of the mantles and baseboards were marbleized, a technique in which rags, feathers or putty is used to smudge paint while it is wet. Three marble patterns were used -- light blue-gray with dark veins, light and dark gray, and white with gray veins. Rose, medium green and light rose accents highlighted some of the marbleized mantles and baseboards.

Painstakingly done by hand labor -- presumably slave labor -- the graining and marbleizing are impressive. Even the exterior of the front entry door was grained. Most of the rooms

were painted light blue with white ceilings and trim. The woodwork of one of the first floor rooms was painted a medium rose. Although the exterior of the house was Georgian, the interior was Greek Revival.[9]

The first house alteration added a fifth room to the second floor.[10] The room, later turned into a bathroom-dressing room by Elliott Springs, may have served as a nursery, playroom, or an additional bedroom for some of the nine children in the White household.

The only known description of the pre-Civil War house furnishings was written by Cordelia White Phifer, granddaughter of William Elliott White. Miss Phifer wrote in 1919: 'The front and back parlors were furnished in upholstered mahogany furniture and velvet carpet, and over the high mantelpieces were colonial mirrors in gilt frames. The windows were draped with tambour lace curtains and overhung with handsome silk damask, looped back with large cords and tassels to opal glass knobs. The bedrooms were furnished with high four-poster beds, with

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[9]George T. Fore and Associates. "The White Homestead, Fort Mill, South Carolina: "Interior Finishes Analysis". (March 1991)

[10]The date is unknown but it was probably done by William Elliott White in the 1830s or 1840s.

bureaus and washstands corresponding. The dining room was furnished in mahogany.'[11]

Obviously it was a house of distinction. Miss Phifer, with great pride and nostalgia, wrote further: 'From the time of the erection until long after the war between the states, the White home was noted for the lavish hospitality dispensed by its owners. Many distinguished men and women bore testimony of their great pleasure in being guests of Mr. and Mrs. White, who were considered the most elegant and generous hosts of the 'up country' of South Carolina.'

The area lying between Sugar Creek and the Catawba River now called Fort Mill township as seen by the first settlers has been described by Algernon Sidney White in this manner: "Within the corporation limits of Fort Mill was an unbroken forest without a cabin or cleared patch of ground. It was pretty much the same in the balance of the township which then went by the name of The Fork, that is the part of York District included between the Catawba River and Sugar Creek. The northeast corner was blackjack and

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[11]*The Charlotte Observer*, August 9, 1920. "The White Brothers in the Confederate Army".

then called prairie from its level, grassy and treeless appearance."[12]

Plats made by surveyors in 1811 show that the corner trees of Elliott lands were hickory (6), sassafras (4), post oak (2), black oak (2), maple (1), white oak (1), white thorn (1), ash (1), persimmon (1), poplar (1), pine (1), and gum (1).[13]

The English Revolutionary War general, Lord Cornwallis, described the area in even more extravagant terms than did A. S. White. In his diary Cornwallis wrote that the country looked like an English park. Splendid hardwood forests, chiefly oak and hickory, "with no underbrush but greensward as far as the eye can reach" alternated with "level green prairies with buffalo and deer pasturing over them and abundance of wild turkey racing through the open woods."[14]

The Catawba tribe of Indians had probably numbered about six thousand when Thomas "Kanawah" Spratt settled among them around 1763.

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[12]"Reminiscences of A. S. White" as transcribed by F. Murray Mack, November 1, 1909.

[13]"Surveyor's Plat Book and Indian Commissioner's Rent Book."

[14]The Indians regularly burned the underbrush in order to allow grass and peavines to flourish as food for the animals they hunted.

According to legend, Spratt was the first white man to bring a family into the Fort Mill area. Spratt invited friends and in-laws to settle in his neighborhood.

Among those who came to the Fort Mill Indian Land in the 1760s were Elliotts and Barnetts. Mary Spratt, sister of "Kanawah" Spratt, married John Barnett. Their daughter, Mary Barnett, married William Elliott, the grandfather of William Elliott White.

In 1802 Martha Elliott, age twenty-eight, the daughter of William and Mary Barnett Elliott, married Joseph White, age forty, a Revolutionary War soldier from the Waxhaws community of Lancaster District.[15] Their only child, William Elliott White, was born the following year. The next year Joseph White died. From his father William Elliott White inherited two tracts of land, one in the Fort Mill area and one in the Waxhaws,[16] fifteen slaves, and one-half of a cotton gin.

The cotton gin was invented in 1794. It is not known when Joseph White built his prized cotton gin

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[15]His tombstone in Unity cemetery calls him "Capt. Joseph White" and adds a verse that indicates that he was a captain during the Revolution. Revolutionary War records do not bear this out. White probably was elected a captain of the local militia after the war.

[16]The Waxhaws land, 270 acres, was sold in 1805 for $1840.

but it is included in his will nine years later. This illustrates how rapidly cotton-growing penetrated the Piedmont into the Fort Mill area -- an area that, due to the presence of the Indians, was more isolated than most. In two generations the chasm had been spanned from primitive frontier conditions to a cotton culture based on slave labor.

Still, William Elliott White had no title for the land on which he built. By the Treaty of Augusta, signed in 1763, the Catawba Indian tribe owned the land. The tribe, which in 1763 had been large and powerful, was by 1831 reduced to a remnant of its former size. Between 1785 and 1826 every acre of an area 15 miles square (144,000 acres) had been leased to white men who paid a small yearly rent to individual Indians. William E. White's rents were among the highest sums paid. In 1827 he paid $27.07 for rent of several thousand acres.[17]

There is no record of William Elliott White's youth. His father's will, written when William Elliott was one-year-old, stated: "I allow my sd Child to be put to School as Soon as his Strength will admit

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[17]"Surveyor's Plat Book and Indian Commissioner's Rent Book," p. 145. The exact acreage was not given. White paid the rent to John Ayres, Katy Scott, and Jamey Kegg, Chief of the Catawbas.

and So to be continued untill he is put through what is called a Liberal Education . . . ."[18] In his mother's will, written when he was fifteen years of age, she directed that he was "to have a liberal education."[19] Where he went to school and for how long is not known, but a sample of his handwriting shows fine penmanship and a command of the English language superior to that of most of his contemporaries.

In May 1818 Martha Elliott White, after fourteen years of widowhood, married a second time. The second husband was Rev. James Wallis, the pastor of Providence Presbyterian Church in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. He also was headmaster of New Providence Academy that he had founded in 1811.[20] It is possible that William Elliott White attended the school.

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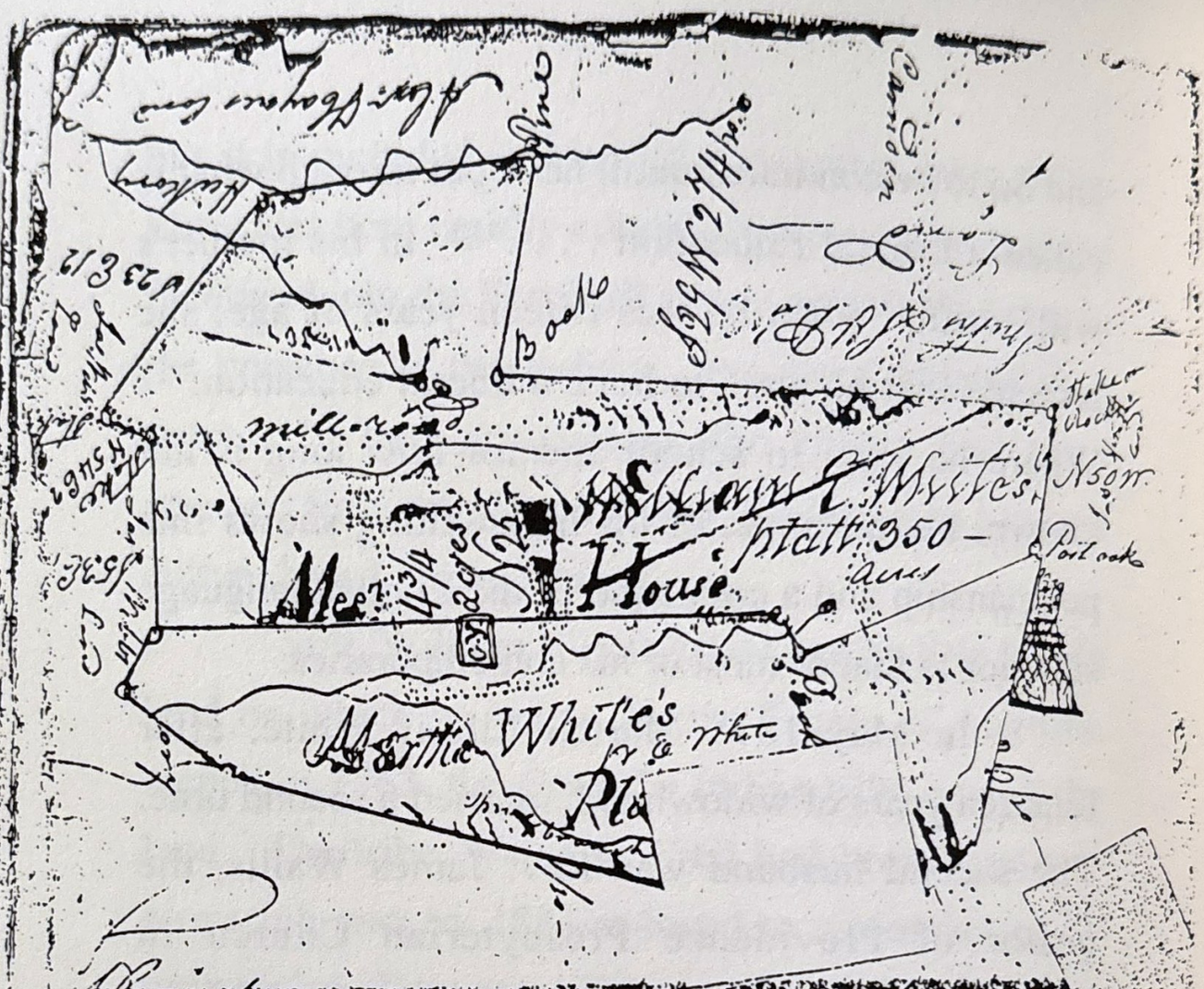
[18]York County Estate Papers, Case #64, File #2998, Joseph White's will, Item 5, June 2, 1804.

[19]York County Estate Papers, Case #49, File 2057, Martha Elliott White Wallis' will, 1819.

[20]It is possible that William Elliott White attended Rev. Wallis' academy, a preparatory school. White did not attend either South Carolina College or the University of North Carolina, the only two institutions of higher education in the Carolinas which offered "a Liberal Education." If he did attend some other college or university no record was found.



[redacted]

and lying in the Indian boundary part of it being once in an old tract Originally leased to John Garrison Senr and part being once owned & Originally leased to Thomas Spratt Senr and hath such shape and forms buttings and boundings as appears by the above platt —

Dated June 5th 1811 —

Signed James Spratt Senr

And a lease Granted thereon to William E. White this Seventh day of June 1811 —

Test J — D —
G — M —
W — P —
H — W —

Superintendants C. N. I.

4 274/68

The above platt represents a tract or parcel of
Land laid off for Saml. Elliott lying and
being in the Indians boundary being parts of
an old tract originally leased to Thomas Spratt Senr.
and hath such shape and forms, buttings and
boundings as will appear by the ~~following~~ above
platt — Dated June 5th 1811 —

Signed James Spratt Senr.

And a lease granted thereon to Saml. Elliott
this seventh day of June 1811 —

Test J— D—
L— M—
W— P— } Superintendants C. N.
H— W—

Reverend Wallis was a widower with grown children.[21] A prenuptial agreement -- a deed of trust -- was signed between Martha White and Reverend Wallis in which he agreed that his only claim to her estate would be $200.[22]

Martha White Wallis died October 23, 1819. Wallis sued the estate for the usual surviving spouse's one-half[23] stating that the prenuptial agreement was not lawful, it being "obtained by surprise and extortion."[24] Martha White Wallis's sister, Dorcas Elliott, and her brother, Samuel Elliott, testified as to her sanity and intent. Reverend Wallis was represented by William B. Wallis. After the lengthy hearing the court probated Martha Wallis's will as she had written it. Reverend Wallis died the following month.

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[21]A few years prior to her death in 1816 Wallis' first wife is said to have been buried alive. She revived and lived several more years after grave robbers dug up her coffin seeking her jewelry.

[22]In her will sixteen months later, Martha Elliott White Wallis said that the $200 was "a small acknowledgment for the great care and Attention he has paid me since our Marriage." York County Probate Court, Case 49, File 2057.

[23]If there was more than one child, the surviving spouse received one-third and the children divided the remaining two-thirds.

[24]York County Estate Records, Case 43, File 740.

William Elliott White, an orphan under the age of 21, had two court-appointed guardians -- his uncle, Samuel Elliott, and a neighbor, David Hutchison. Four and a half years later he was twenty-one and received from his mother's estate land, Negroes and notes payable, totaling $43,301.19.[25]

Four months before William Elliott White received his inheritance from his mother, his uncle, Samuel Elliott, died intestate. Samuel's wife and child had predeceased him, so the court divided his estate among the children of Samuel Elliott's deceased sisters and brother. William Elliott White and George Cathey, his cousin, received one-third each and the minor children of Samuel's deceased brother, William Barnett Elliott, received one-third among them.[26] William Elliott White's share was $2,991.88. It appears that White took as his share, at least in part, the Indian lease land that William Barnett Elliott's estate had sold to Samuel Elliott in 1814 for $1530. In 1824, the Elliott children were living with their

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[25]Receipt of Wm. E. White to David Hutchison Jan 22, 1824. York County Probate Records, Book F, pp. 214-15.

[26]William Barnett Elliott, a Methodist minister, died in 1814. John Brownfield (Brumfield) married his widow, Elizabeth. W. B. Elliott's children were Abram B., Mary, Martha, Susan J. and J. P. York County Estate Records Book F, pp 325-29, Feb. 6, 1824.

mother and stepfather, John Brownfield, in Jasper County, Georgia.

The land on which William Elliott White built the White Homestead appears to be the land he acquired from the estate of his uncle, Samuel Elliott. Not only do the lease plats give evidence but, in addition, in 1904, Samuel Elliott White had a list of the owners of the White Homestead land inscribed on a cannon ball in this order: the Catawba Indians, William Elliott, Samuel Elliott, William Elliott White, David Hutchison White, Samuel Elliott White, Grace White Springs, and Elliott White Springs.[27]

In 1826 William Elliott White became a merchant. His store was located at the junction of present-day Highway 160 and Highway 21 Business--opposite the old Fort Mill Manufacturing Company (later Plant #1 of Springs Industries). Other than the usual whiskey, tobacco, homespun cloth and sugar sold by country stores, White's Store offered fine imported dress goods, shoes, china, fur hats, ribbons, combs, spices, spectacles and a wide variety

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[27]The inscribed cannon ball was placed over the spring at the White Homestead. The first part of the inscription, "1741 acquired from the Indians," is incorrect. The date acquired was ca. 1763.

of medicines and herbs. He seems to have done a thriving business.[28]

In 1827 White was granted a tavern license by York District and on April 12, 1827 he was appointed postmaster with the post office designated as "White's Store."[29] The tavern license expired in 1831 and the postmaster appointment ended on August 9, 1832.

William Elliott White and Sarah Robinson Wilson married February 23, 1824, about a month after he was twenty-one.[30] Sarah was also born in 1803. She was the daughter of the Rev. John Makemie Wilson and Mary Erwin of Burke County, North Carolina.

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[28]An order for $500 to $600 worth of shoes was sent to Hiram Hutchison, son of William Elliott White's former guardian, David Hutchison. When White changed his mind and asked Hiram Hutchison to cancel the order, Hutchison sent him a stinging letter chastising him for reneging on the order and added that the senior Hutchison would be very upset. There is no record of David Hutchison's feelings on the matter but William Elliott White named his youngest son, David Hutchison White. David Hutchison Papers, Winthrop College Archives.

[29]Harvey S. Teal and Robert J. Stets. *South Carolina Postal History and Illustrated Catalog of Postmarks*. (Lake Oswego, Ore., Raven Press, 1989).

[30]The month and day of William E. White's birth has not been found. The year 1803 is given in all sources. Since York County records show his guardianship formally terminated on January 22, 1824, at which time he was at least twenty-one years of age, it is assumed that he was born in January 1803 prior to the 22nd day of the month.

The Whites had nine children: Joseph Harvey, Mary Martha, Margaret Adelaide, Sara Cordelia "Delia," John Makemie, William Edward, Samuel Elliott, James Wilson, and David Hutchison born between 1827 and 1843. Sarah Cordelia, the fourth child, was probably the first to be born in the White Homestead.

A large plantation such as William Elliott White's would have provided plenty of activity for the children. They learned to ride horseback, played with each other and the numerous black children, took music and dancing lessons, and made friends with the children of neighboring plantations. Overnight guests were common. There were parties that lasted a week or more especially when the harvest was laid by and at Christmas. Valentine dances were a major social event.

The White children visited relatives and friends as far away as Burke and Cabarrus counties in North Carolina. The Springs family were neighbors and they had numerous Mecklenburg relatives. A Springs cousin, E. C. B. Davidson, wrote Mary Martha White, May 14, 1848, from Dragoon Camp in Mexico that he hated the Mexican food and dreamed

of eating "Chicken Pie" with her again.[31] Davidson added, "I well recollect the evening we walked to the Pond to fish and the many subjects we talked on. I would be pleased to have the same walk once more with my much esteemed friend, more for the purpose of hearing her talk than to do it myself. Have you been back to the pond since?"

The first child to marry was the eldest daughter, Mary Martha. April 10, 1849, she married William Fullenwider Phifer, a prosperous Alabama planter who was only six years younger than her father. The Rev. John Wilson, Mary Martha's uncle, performed the ceremony in the White Homestead.

No description of the wedding has been left but when Mary Martha's niece, Grace Allison White, married Leroy Springs, the newspaper account reported that as was customary in all of the White family weddings, "the cakes were crescent-shaped and piled in pyramids."[32]

The White children attended the best schools of the day.[33] Mary Martha was educated at Madame

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[31]The letter was found in the White Homestead attic by workmen renovating the house in the summer of 1991.

[32]*The Charlotte Observer*, December 29, 1892, p. 1.

[33]This is true of the five mentioned. No records on the schooling of Margaret, Cordelia, James, or David H. were found.

Dupre's School at Charleston, South Carolina. Described as "a woman of rare grace and refinement," Mary Martha was also recognized as being bright and witty in conversation and one who entertained with great ease and grace. Her strong points were her love for the church. . . . .and her untiring devotion and love for her home and family." [34]

The oldest son, Joseph Harvey, graduated from Davidson College; John Makemie graduated with distinction from SC College in 1855. William Edward was educated at Davidson College and the University of New York where he finished with a Doctor of Medicine degree in 1858. Samuel Elliott finished Kings Mountain Military Academy, a Citadel preparatory school in Yorkville, and attended the Citadel for three years.

Besides being a storekeeper and planter, William Elliott White became a partner of his neighbor, John Springs III, in the spring of 1832. Springs, who was twenty-one years older than White, took the lead in the arrangements. Millstones were brought up from Camden on the boat that took down Springs' cotton. The grist mill was erected on the

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[34]Florence Adams Mims, "White Records," genealogical data in White Family Papers, #2, n. p.

west side of the Nation Ford on land owned by White. The Nation Ford was an ancient crossing first used by the Catawba Indians and the road to and from the Ford was one of the busiest in the area. Eventually, White and Springs added a meat market to the grist mill operations.[35]

Eight years after construction of the grist mill there was a gathering of hundreds of leaseholders and the "chiefs and head men" of the Catawba tribe. They met on William Elliott White's land on the west side of the Catawba River at the Nation Ford crossing. Five state-appointed commissioners were assigned the task of hammering out a treaty with the Indians that would transfer 144,000 acres from the Catawbas to the white leaseholders. It was an exciting time. The Indians agreed to the treaty.[36] After a massive land survey, state grants were given the leaseholders in exchange for the Indian leases.

The weather was a significant factor in the life of a planter. Too wet or too dry seasons were a

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[35]White's interest in the grist mill was sold after his death. In 1880 records show that the mill was owned by Richard Austin Springs, son of John Springs III. The grist mill was washed away in the Great Flood of 1887 and the site sold.

[36]The Nation Ford Treaty is, in 1992, still a point of contention between the Catawba Indians and the state of South Carolina.

yearly risk. A prolonged drought that lasted five or six years was so severe by 1845 that it has been labeled the "Year of the Corn Panic." Corn, the mainstay in the diet of both man and beast, grew only knee-high that year and failed to develop ears. The cotton crop was equally disastrous. In November John Springs witnessed a caravan of "130 souls" leaving Yorkville for the West and predicted there would be many more by spring. Springs, and probably White, who emulated him, had heeded the old Biblical injunction to put aside a seventh part against hard times, so that they did not suffer severely and, in fact, fed many of the neighbors and their livestock.

For many years the Whites and Springses had floated their cotton crops and their surplus grains down the river to Camden. Portage was a necessity to get around the Great Falls of the Catawba. It was expensive and worrisome. After the railroad became a possibility there came the dream of by-passing water transportation in favor of freight cars. John Springs was an early investor in the South Carolina Rail Road and used his influence on the railroad to expand northward.

By 1848 there were plans for the construction of a new line from Columbia to Charlotte.[37] A company was formed by William E. White, Baxter Springs, Austin Springs, and William Myers[38] to build the railroad bed through Fort Mill township for the Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta Railroad (CC&A).

The railroad, which was finished in 1851, created the towns of Fort Mill and Rock Hill. The Fort Mill depot was placed on William E. White's land. The land that is now downtown Fort Mill was all owned by White. With the coming of the railroad there was a demand for business lots near it. In 1851 White built the first business house on what became Fort Mill's Main Street and rented it to Barnhardt, Coltharp & Co.[39]

In 1857 William E. White moved to Charlotte.[40] His three oldest children were married

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[37]John Springs was convinced that it would not be possible to build a trestle over the Catawba River and lobbied for placing the track entirely on the east side of the river.

[38]Baxter and Austin Springs were sons of John Springs, III and William Myers was his nephew.

[39]Fort Mill *Times* clipping, n. d. In the 1890s the building was referred to as "White's Old Store" and was occupied by K. Shannon, merchant; Drs. Massey and Kirkpatrick as an office; the post office, and the printing firm of J. S. Drakeford.

[40]Fort Mill *Times*, Sept 18, 1924. The article said that William E. White was ordained an elder of the church about the

and had established households of their own. John Makemie White, the fourth child, was a school teacher.[41] The next three were in college. The two youngest, James Wilson and David Hutchison, were sixteen and fourteen. Perhaps they were in college or in a Charlotte preparatory school. In spite of the owner's move to Charlotte, the plantation remained in operation, undoubtedly under the direction of a hired overseer.

In 1860 William E. White owned 3699 acres with 1233 acres listed as "improved." The value of the plantation was placed at $29,600. Sixty-four bales of cotton were ginned that year. The inventory showed a high number of cattle (14 milk cows and 27 "other cattle") and 140 swine.[42] The meat market at

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year 1844. "He removed to Charlotte in 1857, but kept his connection with Unity Church until he died in 1865. He left a legacy of $500 cash to Unity Church."

[41]John Makemie White graduated from S. C. College with honors in 1855. His first teaching position is not known but he was teaching at Rock Hill Academy ("Pine Grove Academy") in 1859-1860.

[42]U. S. Census for South Carolina, 1860. Agricultural Schedules. The White plantation also had four horses, 16 mules, and 8 working oxen. Produce included 500 bu. wheat, 4,000 bu. corn, 1,000 bu. oats, 300 bu. peas, 100 bu. sweet potatoes, 6 tons hay and 400 lb. of butter. (The 1850 agricultural census, p. 829, had shown 760 improved acres of 3,026 acres total and a cash value of the land set at $15,130 which indicates a great deal of land clearing and expansion over

White and Springs Grist Mill on the Nation Ford was obviously being furnished with meat from the White plantation.

The year 1860 was a presidential election year. When Abraham Lincoln campaigned and won on a platform that called for no slavery in the territories it was obvious that the old Southern "way of life" was about to come to an end. Within a week of Lincoln's election a secession convention was scheduled to meet in Columbia, S. C. in late December. Meanwhile, the White brothers, John M., Joseph Harvey, and Samuel, raised a company of men from the Fort Mill area and offered their services to South Carolina.[43] The offer was premature. The state was debating secession but had no overall plan for the consequences of secession. The White's offer was turned down "due to the uncertainty of the times." The company was disbanded and the men subsequently entered various other commands.

Joseph Harvey White raised a company for the 53rd Regiment and became its captain. John

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the ten year period. The 1850 census also showed five milk cows, 15 other cattle, 80 swine and 10 sheep).

[43]Confederate Military History, Vol. 5, Gen. Clement H. Evans, Ed., The Blue and Gray Press, n. d., pp 210-12. John McKemie White was captain and his brothers Harvey and Samuel E. were lieutenants.

Makemie White became a lieutenant colonel in the Sixth South Carolina Regiment. Samuel E. White was lieutenant and then captain of Co. B, 7th North Carolina Regiment.

William Edward White was surgeon of the 7th North Carolina Regiment and James Wilson White was captain of Co. B, 1st South Carolina Cavalry. David Hutchison White did not enlist. One account says he was "too young." However, David was nineteen when the war broke out and twenty-three when it ended. It is possible that the family agreed that one of the six sons should stay on the plantation (Both parents were living in Charlotte). Also, it may be that David H. had health problems--he spent the last eighteen years of his life in Hot Springs, Arkansas, a notable health resort of the time.

The War, a tragedy in every sense of the word, struck the White family severely. Edward White, the surgeon, was the first to die. After contracting camp fever he was brought home and died at the White Homestead, November 1, 1861, leaving a wife, née Sarah Caldwell,[44] and an infant daughter who died in 1864.[45]

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[44]Davidson, Chalmers Gaston. The Plantation World Around Davidson (Davidson, NC: Briarpatch Press, 1969). The daughter of Rev. David Alexander Caldwell of Mecklenburg

On May 12, 1864 Joseph Harvey White was killed by a shell in front of the breastworks at Spottsylvania, Virginia. Prior to the war, on Oct. 16, 1850, he married Sarah J. Young, daughter of Joseph Young, a merchant and planter of Cabarrus County, N. C. Harvey White was first a commission merchant at Charleston, S. C. and then bought a farm near Charlotte, North Carolina. He was residing there when the war broke out.

Samuel Elliott White was severely wounded, suffering a fractured skull, in an engagement near the end of the war at New Bern in eastern North Carolina.

In 1864 the wife and mother, Sarah Robertson Wilson White, died in Charlotte. A portrait painted of

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County. Chalmers Davidson said that, "Mr. Caldwell's only daughter Sally, educated at Edgeworth Seminary in Greensboro, was a lady of rare brilliance and became a noted teacher after the Confederate war."

[45]William E. White's will provided only $1,000 for the widow and the daughter, William Edythe, and that only on condition that "no claim is to be asserted by them or either of them against my estate on account of a Plantation, Negroes & other property in South Carolina having been placed by me in the possession of my said son William Edward White for which I had given him no title and the possession of which I reserved after his death in case any such claim was asserted. Then my will is that the Legacies herein given to my said grand daughter and daughter-in-law shall be forfeited by them and the property and pecuniary Legacies so given shall revert to my Estate to be equally divided among my children above named".

her in 1855 shows dark hair, strong regular features, and deep-set black eyes.[46] Even though Sarah White had moved from the White Homestead, there is evidence that she loved it: "The mistress of the Homestead planted many trees and shrubs around the grounds, and a beautiful box-bordered flower garden which contained a large choice collection of roses, jasamines, and other rare flowers brought from many faraway places was her special pride."[47]

Also in 1864 the daughter Sarah Delia, wife of Lewis S. Williams, died. She was 32 years of age and had one child, Addie. Addie later married J. P. Caldwell, editor of the Charlotte Observer. Addie's newspaper column, "One Minute Interviews," and other writings are a major source of information on the White Homestead and the people who lived in it.

The war was coming to an end in the spring of 1865. Jefferson Davis and his cabinet had fled Richmond. Col. John M. White had led a brigade of the 6th Regiment of SC Volunteers in Virginia and was one of those guarding the wagon train that

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[46]The portrait, oil on canvas, 35 1/2 X 28 1/2, was by William Garl Browne, signed. Browne did a matching portrait of William Elliott White. In appearance he was a large man who appears to have reddish hair and a ruddy complexion.

[47]*Charlotte Observer*, August 9, 1920. "The Five White Brothers in the Confederate Army" by Mrs. J. P. Caldwell.

followed Jefferson Davis and his cabinet officers to Charlotte.[48]

Not far behind the wagon train was a Union force known as Stoneman's Raiders. About the time that Davis was in Charlotte, Stoneman captured Salisbury, NC.

Officials of the Bank of Charlotte held about $40,000 in silver. Fearing Stoneman would next head for Charlotte, the bank prepared to hide the silver coins.[49]

J. Harvey Wilson, the brother of Sarah Wilson White, was one of the directors of the Bank of Charlotte and was given the duty of hiding the coins. Wilson enlisted the aid of his nephew, John Makemie White. White was sick and exhausted but found a buggy and loaded the money during a cold rain. Wilson and White, fearing marauders, traveled at night down the old Nation Ford Road.

About one mile from the White homestead, they stopped to bury the silver. Having no tools to dig a hole, White approached his father's home from the rear, looking for a shovel. Finding none and

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[48]Jefferson Davis stayed at the Phifer home. Cordelia White Phifer wrote that he "frequently was a guest there." *Charlotte Observer*, August 9, 1920.

[49]Most accounts refer to gold coins but the official records say it was silver coins.

afraid he would be detected, he sneaked inside the house and got a fire shovel. It was about 2 a. m. when the men finished their work.

Afraid he might have left signs of his digging, White returned the next day by a circuitous route to the spot where he had placed the silver. After further obscuring the cache with twigs and branches, White returned home by a different route.

White gave his uncle, who was eager to return to Charlotte, a horse to ride. Wilson was soon stopped by a group of men who claimed to be Confederates sent by a General Ferguson to secure horses for his forces. They demanded Wilson's horse. Wilson insisted on personally seeing Ferguson. When one of them grabbed the reins, White threatened to shoot the man. White was warned that he was outnumbered and would surely die.

Just then Robert Fullwood, a neighbor, came up to the scene, "steadying by a good walking stick his footsteps, tottering under the load of three score and 10 years." Fullwood also took hold of the bridle, telling the raider that White was his lifelong friend and he would rather die than let them take the horse.

This would most likely not have stopped the raiders, but it happened that another Confederate,

Capt. John Mills, a friend of White, rode up with a company of Alabama men. Mills told the would-be thieves that they had better disperse or he would have them arrested and hanged. The men sullenly departed, vowing vengeance.

A few minutes later, White saw the smoke from the burning railroad trestle over the Catawba River at Nation Ford.

Wilson and White returned to Charlotte 'worn out and sick.' After they left Fort Mill the old homestead kitchen (a separate building and typical for its time) was set afire by Union forces but was extinguished. However, the White gin house with 120 bales of cotton and 2,000 bushels of cotton seed was burned.

A marker erected in front of the White Homestead reads as follows:

Last Confederate Cabinet Meeting

SC 160, near W city limits, Fort Mill

En route South, President Davis and his cabinet, hospitably received at Fort Mill, spent the night of April 26, 1865, at the homes of Col. Andrew Baxter Springs and of Col. Wm. Elliott White. Here on Col. White's lawn,

April 27, 1865, the cabinet held its last meeting, at which the resignation of G. A. Trenholm, Secretary of the treasury, was accepted and Postmaster General John H. Reagan was appointed his successor *ad interim.*[50]

The cabinet had met five days before at the home of William Fullenwider Phifer, son-in-law of William Elliott White. Various accounts refer to White as Colonel White but how he got the title is a mystery. Nor is it known whether White was in Charlotte at the time of the meeting in the Phifer home and then accompanied the cabinet to Fort Mill, or if White was already in Fort Mill, but several accounts say he hosted the Fort Mill meeting.

Jefferson Davis was captured in Georgia on May 10, 1865. Resistance had ended by the end of May. Three surviving White brothers, John

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[50]The wording on the marker was worked out and arrangements made for erection of the marker following an extensive correspondence of Nora Davis of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History and Elliott White Springs, April 26, 1939-March 18, 1940. Springs personally paid $65 for the marker and arranged for his workers to erect it but refused to make a speech to mark the occasion, saying that "Since I am donating the marker and the names of both my grandparents are prominently displayed thereon, any ceremony would have a decided odor of narcissus about it."

Makemie, Samuel Elliott, and James Wilson, were home. Their first enterprise was the building of a ferry at Nation Ford to operate until the CC&A Railroad could rebuild the trestle.

William Elliott White died at his home in Charlotte on February 11, 1865. He was buried beside his wife, Sarah Robinson Wilson White, in Elmwood Cemetery in Charlotte, N. C. White's will had been written in 1862 prior to the deaths of his wife and two sons killed in the war. A codicil was attached on the 15th of December 1864.[51]

By the time White's will was probated the Confederate bonds that were distributed among heirs were worthless. The slaves he had distributed as property among children and grandchildren were now free. Each daughter was willed $2,000 and eight to thirteen slaves. The sons received land and a larger proportion of slaves. Since half of White's money had been in Confederate bonds, by the fortunes of war, the sons, by inheriting land, received a disproportionate share of the property. The post-war evaluation of White's estate was around $35,000.

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[51] York County Wills, Case 57, File 2584. John M. White was the sole executor following the death of his brother, Joseph Harvey White. His bond was $70,000 which indicates a total estate value of slightly less than $47,000.

The pre-war evaluation, which included the slaves, would have been around $210,000.

There were 140 slaves listed by name in White's will. When the war was over many, if not most, of the ex-slaves adopted White as their surname.

The White Homestead, five tracts of land, and nineteen slaves had been left to Sarah White as a life estate and upon her death to go to David Hutchison White, the youngest son. The will directed the sale of the Charlotte house and lots, a tract of land near Charlotte, and the mill at the Nation Ford[52] and the money arising from the sale to be divided equally among the surviving children.

Samuel Elliott White, named for his great-uncle Samuel Elliott, was the only child in his family to receive a military education. He graduated from Kings Mountain Academy, a preparatory school for the Citadel. At the Citadel he was an honor student[53] until, in his junior year, he led a student rebellion

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[52]White's heirs received $3150.04 for the "Old Mill" and the meat and hides on hand.

[53]"Official Register of the Officers and Cadets at the South Carolina Military Academies," Nov. 1856, Nov. 1857, Apr. 1859.

against the arbitrary rule of a Professor Stevens. Sam White was expelled along with ten other cadets.[54]

He spent the next two years in Texas and Mexico, returning in time to participate in the Civil War.[55] On November 21, 1866, Samuel Elliott White married Esther Phifer Allison, daughter of Robert Washington "Wash" Allison and Sarah Ann Phifer of Concord, North Carolina.

Perhaps Sam and Esther White lived in North Carolina after their marriage. Annie Washington White, their first child was born in North Carolina in 1868. The 1870 census shows them living in the White Homestead with Sam's brother, David H.[56] The second child, Grace Allison, was born at the Homestead on November 14, 1871.[57]

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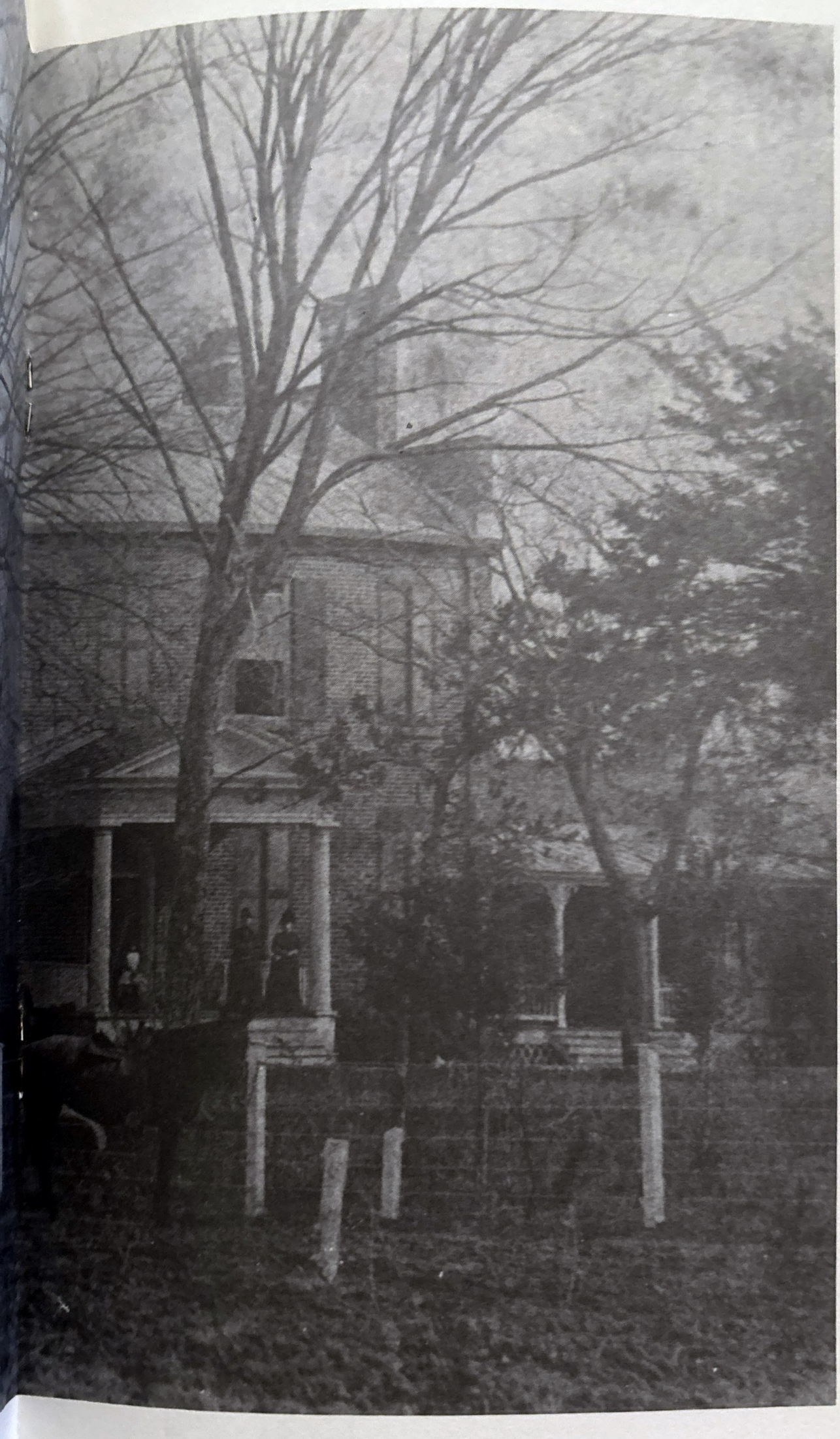
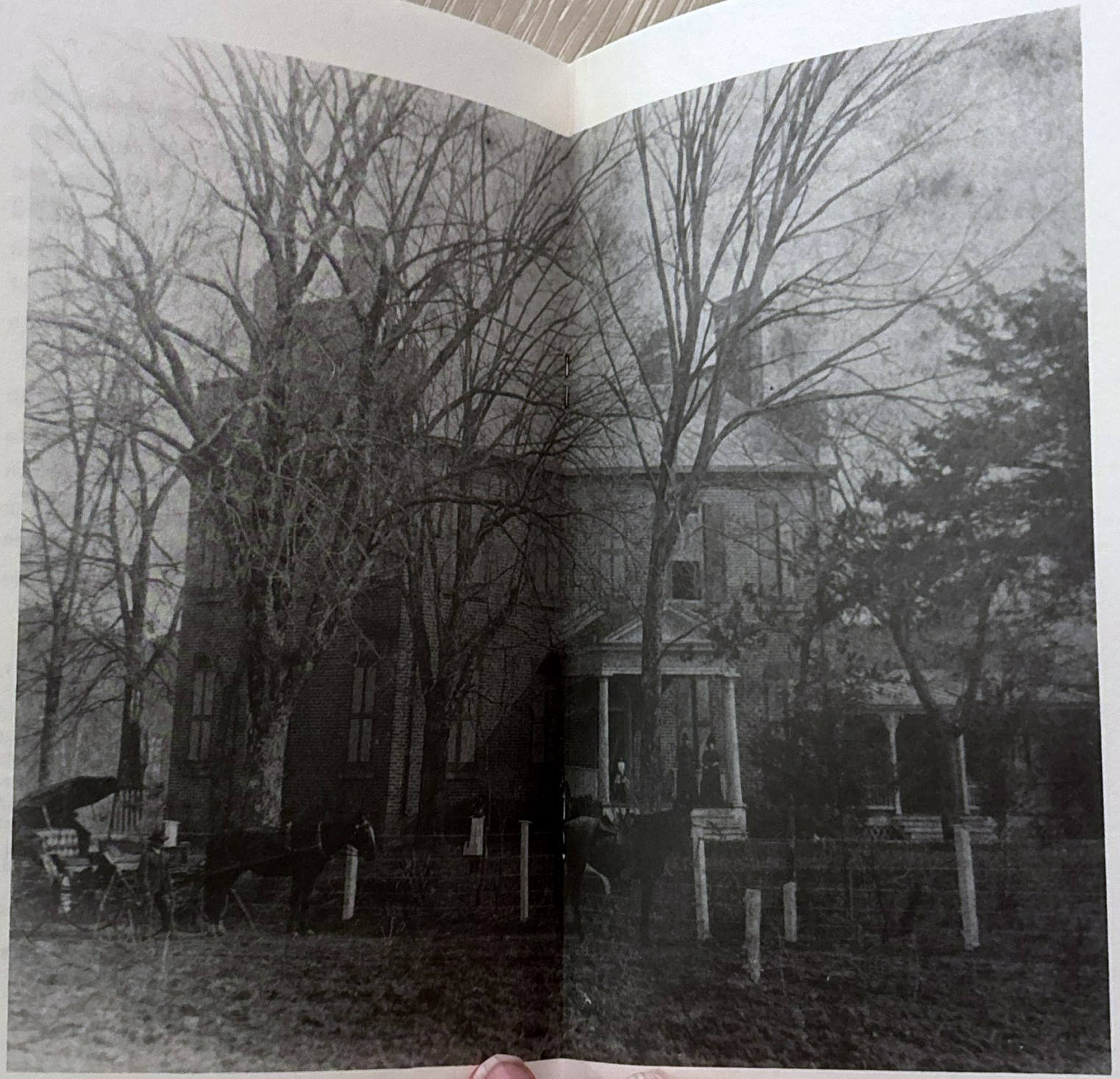
[54]*The Courier*, Charleston, S. C., Feb. 19, 20, 25, 27, Mar. 3, 1958 *The Mercury*, Charleston, S. C., Mar. 1, 1858. O. J. Bond, The Story of the Citadel, Richmond, VA.: Garrett and Massie, 1936. The most detailed account of the incident (written by one of the expelled) is to be found in Citadel Cadets - The Journal of Cadet Tom Law, Clinton, S. C.: P. C. Press, 1941. According to the "Official Register of the Officers and Cadets at the South Carolina Military Academies," Samuel Elliott White was an honor student at the time he was expelled.

[55]Confederate Military History, Vol. IV, Gen. Clement H. Evans, Ed. The Blue and Gray Press, n. d.

[56]Also in the house were two blacks, Rachel Fifer, 25, and Ballard Brown, 35, a farm laborer.

[57]Grace Allison White was the only child of Samuel E. and Esther P. White to reach adulthood. Annie Washington and





The agricultural census of 1870 is revealing. David H. White had the White Homestead and 1160 acres. The farm's cash value was set at $9,000. Samuel E. White had 950 acres with an $8000 cash value. John M. White had 900 acres. His farm's cash value was $4,500.

The value of production on David White's land was $2406; on John M. White's land the year's profits were $2646. But on Samuel E. White's land the profit was $14,732, the largest profit in Fort Mill township. Samuel achieved this total on less land planted (350 acres) than his brother John M. (480 acres). David planted 250 acres.

Right after the Civil War David H. White left Fort Mill for Cameron, Texas, a place about half way between Dallas and Austin.[58] "Capt. Love" was his partner in a ranching operation. David was at

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William Elliott each died at the age of four years; Robert Allison, the youngest child, died at the age of three years. According to Esther P. White's obituary in the *Lancaster Review*, May 6, 1906, she was the mother of three daughters and two sons.

[58]In letters written to James W. White, David mentions having superintended the mending of three and a half miles of fencing, chasing wild hogs, and speaks of having few neighbors to alleviate the loneliness of ranch life. The letters, dated March 6, 1867, June 23, 1867, and April 12, 1868, are part of the James W. White papers in the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina.

Cameron for at least two years. In a letter written in April 1868 to his brother, James Wilson White, he described an invasion of grasshoppers that threatened the crops. Perhaps the grasshoppers sent him back to South Carolina. In the 1870 census he was living in the White Homestead.

In 1873 David White sold the White Homestead and 1160 acres of land to his brother Samuel for $500.[59] No explanation for the token sum has been left. It may be that David White and Capt. Love lost the Texas ranch and brother Sam bailed David out in exchange for David's Fort Mill property. In the 1880 agricultural census there is no entry for David White. In the population census he is listed as living alone on Academy Street and under occupation is the word "Unemployed." His neighbors on Academy Street were a shoemaker, grocer, house carpenter, a mulatto farmer and a black laborer. In 1888 David White moved to Hot Springs, Arkansas. He died there in 1906 but his body was brought back to Unity Cemetery in Fort Mill for burial.[60]

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[59]York County Deed Book Y, p. 424.

[60]One possible explanation of David White's removal to Arkansas would be that he suffered from tuberculosis which was fairly common in his day. It could explain why he remained a bachelor, removed himself from the White Homestead, and why

In 1875 John Makemie White married Addie E. Allison, the sister of Samuel's wife, Esther. White built a fine Victorian House close to downtown. A year and a half later, May 13, 1877, John M. died. Samuel E. and Esther with their six-year-old daughter, Grace Allison, and three-year-old son, Robert Allison White, moved in with the widow.[61] The White Homestead would not be lived in by another White descendant until 1922.

About the time Samuel E. White moved to the Victorian House, he became a merchant. Using profits from the plantation, which he continued to manage, White set up a store.[62] The Panic of 1878 bankrupted every merchant in Fort Mill except for Sam White who lost $15,000.

Sam White did not open another store but "went to farming in earnest." He dropped diversified

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he sought out a health resort. This points to Samuel E. White remaining David White's source of financial support for the remainder of his life, but there is no surviving evidence of this. Perhaps, after the loss from his ranching experiment, David White simply lost his incentive for farming.

[61]The house, on White Street across from the Springs Industries, Inc. Executive Office Building, is now known as "The Founder's House."

[62]*Yorkville Enquirer*, "Some Men of Fort Mill, S. C.," ca. 1890. Neither the name of the store or its nature were given in the article but it was probably a general merchandise or farm supply store.

farming for concentration on cotton.[63] He increased his farm operations each year until he held 3,500 acres of land and had a Bradstreet credit rating of $75,000.

As a plantation manager White was unusual in that he preferred not to use the tenant farmer or sharecropper systems that were prevalent all over the South after the Civil War. On at least one of his plantations, White paid his workers cash weekly. Also, he hired only blacks. He firmly believed that blacks and whites shouldn't mix in the fields and that blacks were better suited to agricultural labor.

The upheavals, both social and economic, of Reconstruction were not to White's liking--he mostly remained unreconstructed in his thinking.[64] When the Ku Klux Klan was most active in the early 1870s, White had participated and is said to have drilled the Fort Mill KKK as if they were Confederate soldiers. This may have been to the good, for no Fort Mill KKK member was arrested for Ku Klux activity at a

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[63]Ibid. Unfortunately, the crop statistics for 1880 as listed are identical to the 1870 statistics except for the total value of the crop which was $4732 for Samuel E. White.

[64]Elliott White Springs once said of his grandfather that after Appomatox he refused to swear allegiance to the United State, never again went north of the Mason-Dixon line, and was buried with a Confederate flag.

time that other York County men were being tried, convicted, and sent to federal prison by the dozens.

The Charleston earthquake of 1886 was so powerful that it was felt as far away as Canada, Louisiana and the Bermuda Islands. The White Homestead, sturdy as it is, until the late 1980s, showed a large crack on the second floor northeast corner that resulted from the quake.

The year 1886 also stands out as the year Sam White took the leadership in founding the Fort Mill Manufacturing Company. He became its president and chief cotton buyer.[65] At the same time he was president of the bank and was a trustee of Unity Presbyterian Church property and chairman of the Fort Mill Academy board.

White founded the Jefferson Davis Memorial Association and underwrote its feminine counterpart, the Ladies' Confederate Memorial Association. He donated the land known as Confederate Park to the town of Fort Mill. In the park are four monuments. One is dedicated to the Confederate veterans, one to the women of the Confederacy; one to the loyal slaves, and the fourth to the Catawba Indians. Sam

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[65]For a full account of his cotton mill activities see Louise Pettus, The Springs Story -Our First Hundred Years. Fort Mill, S. C.: Springs Industries, Inc., 1987.

White had a hand in the erection of each monument. He led a subscription drive for the Confederate soldier, personally financed the Confederate women and faithful slave monuments, and shared the expense of the Catawba Indian monument with John McKee Spratt.

When Sam White was sixty-four years of age and in feeble health, he decided to retire. He handed over his presidency of the Fort Mill Manufacturing Company to his son-in-law, Leroy Springs.

His wife, Esther Phifer Allison White, was known in Fort Mill as a woman of "rare nobility of character, sweet and lovable disposition, and attractive personality."[66] Esther White had been educated at the Barhamville Academy in Columbia, S. C. and at Burwell's School in Charlotte. Both were finishing schools for girls but Barhamville was particularly known for its classical curriculum. She was noted for good deeds and especially for her charitable work among the "the pale-faced women" of the cotton mill community.

On April 28, 1903, Esther White died suddenly at her Fort Mill home. The *Rock Hill Herald* reported that "Mrs. White had promised her

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[66]*Lancaster Review*, May 6, 1903.

little grandson, Elliott Springs, who was the idol of her heart, that she would take a walk with him, and as she did not come as soon as he expected, the little fellow went into the house and found her lying upon the floor and apparently dead. The alarm was given . . . ."

After Esther White's death, Captain White spent much of his time in Lancaster at the home of his daughter Grace, her husband Leroy Springs, and young Elliott White Springs. Leroy Springs was away from home a great deal. A hard-driving man determined to make a fortune, he was stern and demanding. Captain White became his grandson's mentor and best friend.

On April 30, 1907 Grace White Springs died tragically of cancer at the Kelly Clinic in Baltimore, Md. She was thirty-five years old. The family was shattered. Elliott was sent first to live with the Charles Shannon family in Camden and then to a boarding school in Asheville, N. C. Captain White turned for companionship to the old veterans of Lancaster. He set up a tent on an empty lot next to Leroy Springs' offices, put in a supply of wood for whittling, and a sign over the tent that said, "Brothers of Rest."

Samuel E. White died in Lancaster on March 4, 1911. His funeral was attended by one of the largest gatherings ever seen in Fort Mill. The casket was open and the members of his old company "wept at his bier" along with over a hundred blacks, among them Henry and Andy White who had once belonged to William E. White. He was buried under a magnolia tree in Unity Cemetery in Fort Mill.

The State newspaper closed its long obituary of Samuel E. White with: "As a man Capt. White was the soul of honor, of genial temperament and magnetic personality. An extensive reader and possessing a retentive memory and the gift of expression, he was an exceptionally entertaining conversationalist. Innumerable were his deeds of charity, but, being of innate modesty, his contributions to relieve the unfortunate, the sick and the suffering and to various praiseworthy objects were invariably made without ostentation."[67]

Samuel E. White willed his estate, half to Leroy Springs and half to Elliott White Springs. It was understood that the White Homestead would belong to his grandson, Elliott.

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[67]*The State*. March 4, 1911.

After Samuel Elliott White moved from the White Homestead in 1876 to the Victorian home built by his brother John Makemie White, the White Homestead was used as a home for the plantation overseers.[68] Perhaps the house was repaired in 1897. During the 1991 renovation workmen uncovered the penciled signature of J. D. Sancken with the date Jan. 11, 1897 on the wall of a second-floor room.

During World War I the cotton mills were running around the clock. There was not enough housing for workers. Leroy Springs had the White Homestead divided into three apartments for mill workers "until decay made it unsafe for habitation."[69]

Elliott White Springs, son of Leroy Springs and Grace Allison White, was born in Lancaster in 1896. He attended the public schools of Lancaster until the death of his mother in 1907. After that he attended an Asheville, North Carolina boarding school and Culver Military Institute in Indiana before attending Princeton University. As a boy he visited his grandparents in Fort Mill often. As the only

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[68]*Lancaster News*, March 15, 1940. "Markers to be Erected Near Historic Sites in County; One Recently Placed Near Fort Mill."
[69]Ibid.

grandchild of Samuel Elliott White and Esther Phifer White, he was special to them. When Elliott's mother, an only surviving child, died in 1907 he became the only heir to the White Homestead and the land around it.

Elliott joined the British air corps after graduation from Princeton in 1917. He became a much-decorated hero[70] and squadron commander. One of the letters he wrote home near the end of the war was addressed to his step-mother, Lena Jones Springs. In the letter Elliott told Lena that he thought he would survive the war and wished to lived at the old Homestead. The house had been abandoned for some time and needed much work and money to do a proper renovation. Elliott added, "You needn't say why you are doing it but draw on Father for the limit. Mortgage the mills if necessary, and fix it up right."[71]

With some reluctance Elliott worked for his father in the cotton mills at Lancaster and Kershaw. They fought constantly with Leroy firing him several times. After one bitter fight Elliott went back to

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[70]Springs received the Distinguished Flying Cross from the Duke of Wales and a special war medal from the Aero Club of America. He was officially credited with downing eleven German planes making him the fifth ranking American air ace.

[71]Burke Davis. War Bird. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

Europe for a tour of his old haunts. On the way over he met Frances Ley. Thoughts of marriage turned Elliott back to his old plan to renovate the White Homestead. Apparently the renovation began in the fall of 1921, nearly a year before the wedding.[72] He expanded the stately old brick house by adding porches. He installed a swimming pool and tennis court, landing strip and hangar, and he transformed one room into a small replica of the taproom of Princeton's Old Nassau Inn.[73]

An east wing and porches were added to the White Homestead. Concealed electrical wiring and Colonial candelabra light fixtures were added. Plumbing was installed. The heating radiators were concealed behind grilled panels set deep in thick brick walls. The brick addition was in keeping with the original 1831 structure. The cost of the 1922 additions was somewhere between $20,000 and $50,000.[74]

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[72]Workmen in 1991 uncovered the signature on a second floor wall of C. E. Rutledge beside the date, December 25, 1921. Also, see Burke Davis, War Bird, pp. 94-95.

[73]George Fore, a conservator hired for the 1991 renovation, reports that he found the original marbleized mantel of the room in the basement. A brick-patterned wallpaper was found under layers of paint and other wallpapers.

[74]Burke Davis says $20,000 (War Bird, p. 95) while quoting Elliott about Leroy's opinion: "Says I have made a mess of the

Springs located some of his grandfather White's furniture[75] and bought other pieces of furniture from antique houses in Washington, D. C. and New Orleans. One of the finest items was a four-poster bed for which he paid $125 in New Orleans and an additional $100 to have it refinished.[76]

The farm was not neglected. Although Elliott sought out antiques to furnish the interior of the White Homestead, he wanted modern farm equipment. He bought tractors and joined with Col. T. B. Spratt of Fort Mill in a call to Fort Mill farmers to abandon their devotion to cotton cultivation in favor of diversifying. Around 1925, Springs and Spratt attempted to hire a Clemson graduate in agriculture to serve as a farm agent for the township but, apparently, the other farmers had too much invested in cotton production and did not heed them.

Springs owned several airplanes. He built a hangar and a runway on land that had once been a cotton field.

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house and thrown away $20,000." An undated Charlotte Observer article by Mrs. J. P. Caldwell quotes Mrs. Henry of Wadesboro after her visit to the homestead: "Capt. Elliott White Springs, the present owner has spent $50,000 in improvements recently. . . ."

[75]Burke Davis, War Bird, p. 94.

[76]Elliott Springs, Correspondence, South Caroliniana Library. He also purchased a chest and lamp for $75.

The Homestead's grounds, described in 1922 as "an unkempt jungle,"[77] were gradually cleared and neatened with massive plantings of boxwood, some of which was purchased cheaply from old farm homesteads.

The years 1925 through 1928 encompass Elliott Springs' fiction-writing career. His first story was bought by U. S. Air Services Magazine. Others appeared in McClure's, Liberty, Cosmopolitan, Redbook, College Humor, Bluebook, Adventure, and Harper's.[78] There were seven novels: Nocturne Militaire, Leave Me With a Smile, Above the Bright Blue Sky, Contact, In the Cool of the Evening, The Rise and Fall of Carol Banks, and Warbirds and Ladybirds besides the most famous of his books, Warbirds - The Diary of An Unknown Aviator. First National Pictures, Inc., a movie studio, bought three of his scenarios for motion pictures.

He worked on the books in the breakfast room of the White Homestead where the typist (either Elizabeth "Willy" Mills or Frances Ley Springs) attempted to decipher his nearly illegible longhand.[79]

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[77]Burke Davis, War Bird, p. 97.

[78]Elliott Springs, Clothes Make the Man, introduction.

[79]The three-year burst of creative energy ended without explanation. Perhaps Elliott's real purpose was to demonstrate

It had been forty-eight years since a child had been born at the Homestead when Leroy "Sonny" Springs, II was born in 1924. Sonny was joined by Anne Kingsley Springs in late 1925. Nine months later a German nanny, Tony Dehler, was hired. "Miss Tony" was to remain in the house for fifty-three years--longer than any other occupant. "Miss Tony" (called "To-To" by the Close children and grandchildren) remained to tend the eight children of Anne and Bill Close. Miss Tony is remembered as very strict and very religious. She was a physical fitness advocate with old-fashioned ideas of how fitness was achieved. Anne and Sonny accompanied her on daily hikes on a farm road that covered at least the distance to the "one-mile tree" but were often longer. On occasion, the children hiked to a brick general store near Riverview School four miles away. Sometimes their mother picked them up at that point with the car. If they continued the loop back to the White Homestead the distance was five miles.

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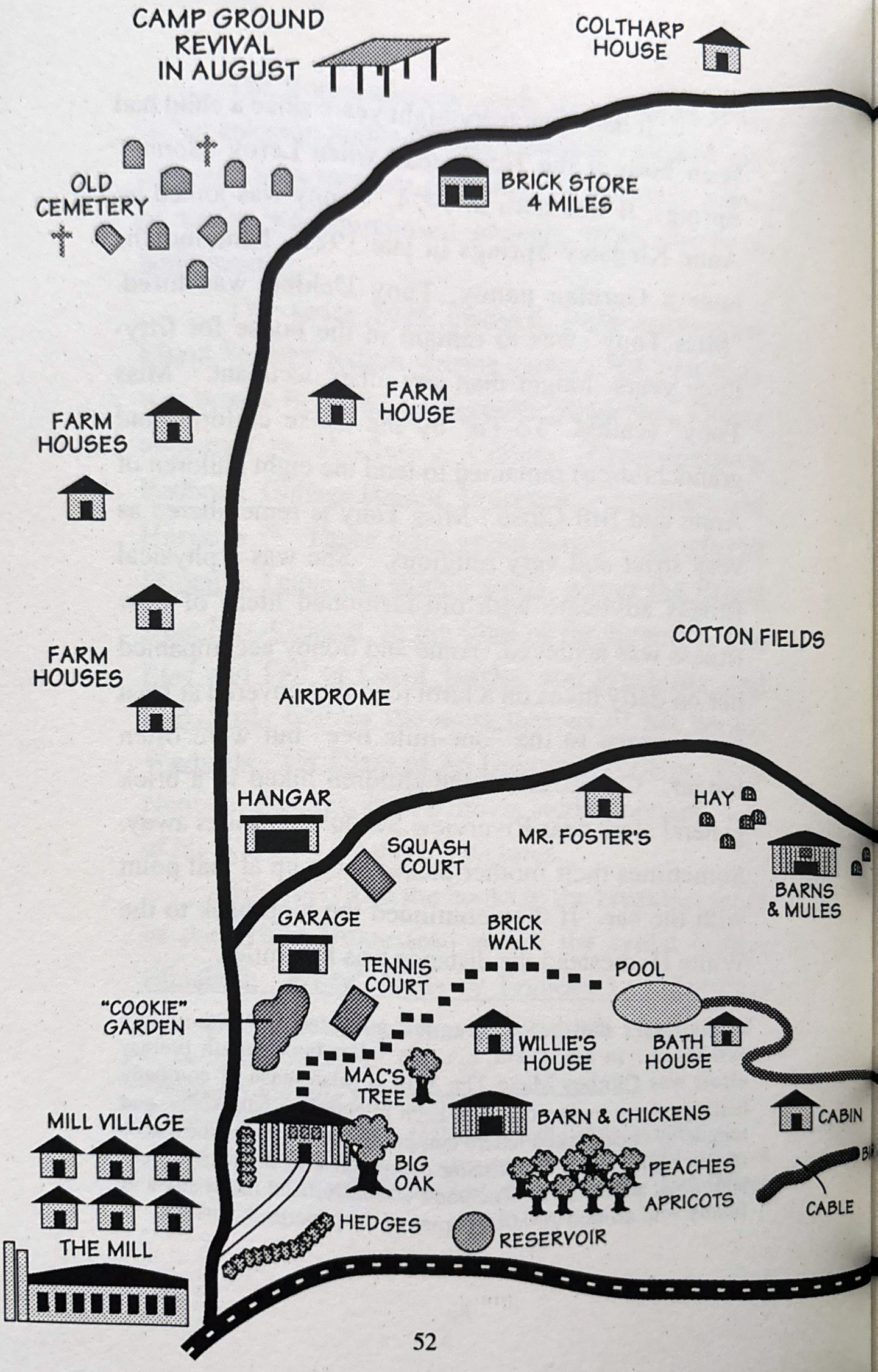
to his father that he could earn a good income without any assistance. In any event, his only other book-length literary effort was Clothes Make The Man, a mish-mash of company history, short stories that had been rejected by publishers, and tongue-in-cheek faked letters that purported to inform the reader of the Springmaid advertising campaign but, in reality, were additional advertising. The book was advertised nationally and finally sold around 100,000 copies of the paperback version.


CAMP GROUND
REVIVAL
IN AUGUST
COLTHARP
HOUSE
OLD
CEMETERY
BRICK STORE
4 MILES
FARM
HOUSE
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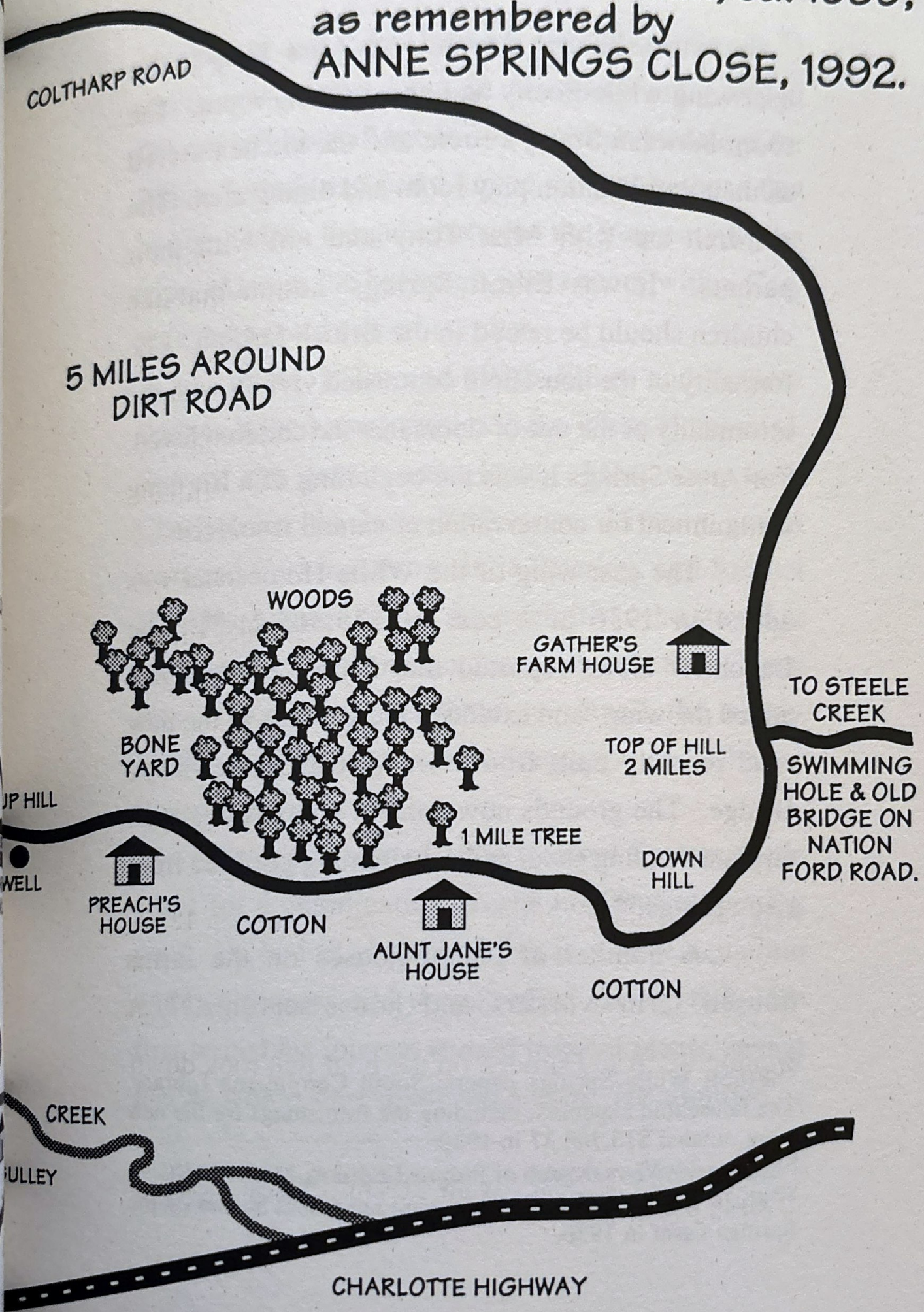
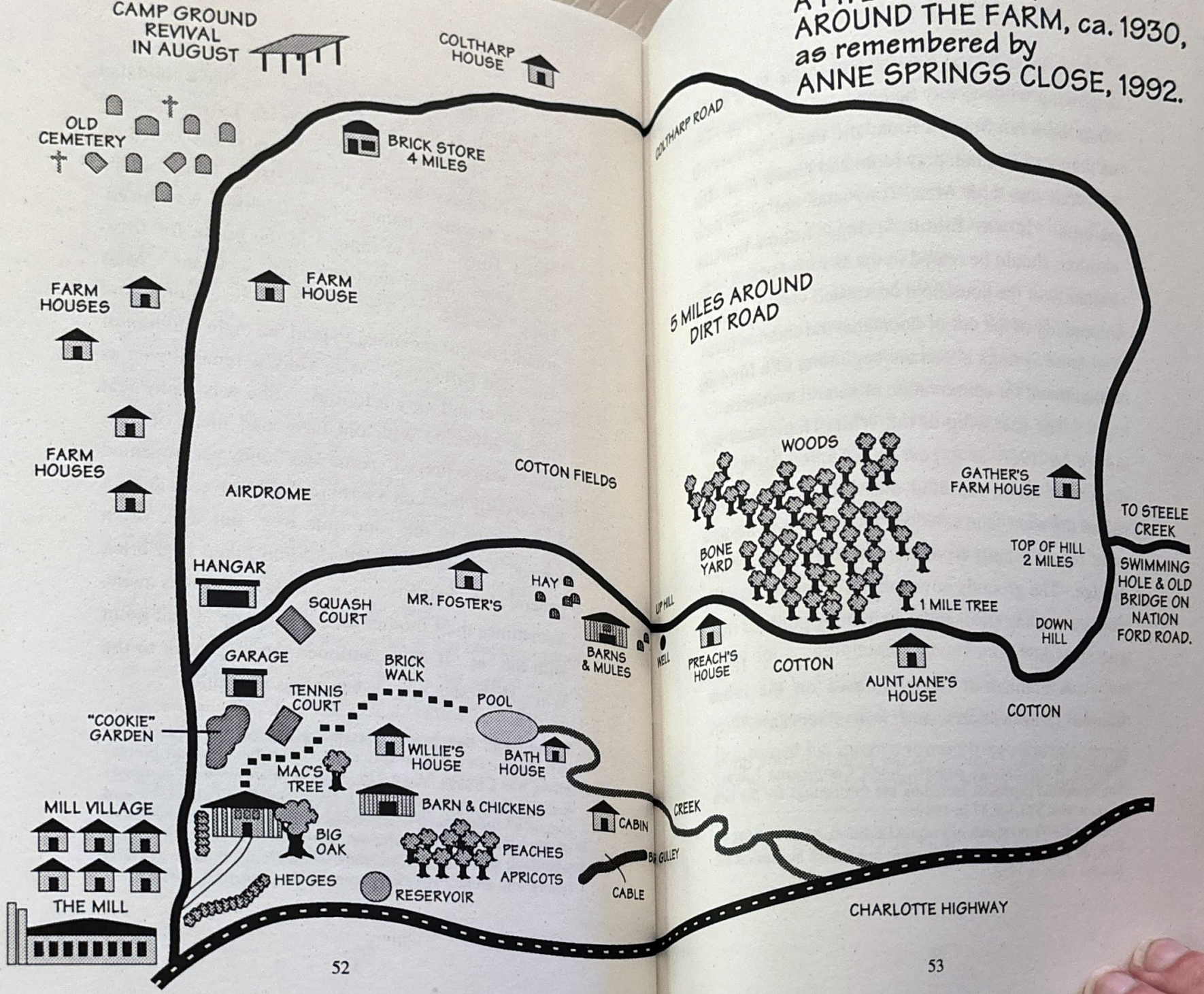
FARM
HOUSES
COTTON FIELDS
AIRDROME
HANGAR
MR. FOSTER'S
HAY
SQUASH
COURT
BARNS
& MULES
GARAGE
BRICK
WALK
TENNIS
COURT
POOL
"COOKIE"
GARDEN
WILLIE'S
HOUSE
BATH
HOUSE
MAC'S
TREE
MILL VILLAGE
BARN & CHICKENS
CABIN
BIG
OAK
PEACHES
APRICOTS
CABLE
HEDGES
RESERVOIR
THE MILL

A FIVE-MILE WALK AROUND THE FARM, ca. 1930, as remembered by ANNE SPRINGS CLOSE, 1992.



A FIVE-MILE WALK AROUND THE FARM, ca. 1930, as remembered by ANNE SPRINGS CLOSE, 1992.



Anne shared a room with Miss Tony in the east wing while Sonny had an adjoining room. The room between Sonny's room and the kitchen served as their combination play room and dining area. The children ate with Miss Tony and not with their parents. It was Elliott Springs' notion that the children should be reared in the British fashion. The formality of the household contrasted vividly with the informality of the out-of-doors that the children loved. For Anne Springs it was the beginning of a life-long commitment for conservation of natural resources.

The east wing of the White Homestead was added in 1936 at a cost of $55,365.21.[80] The Lancaster News reported that Elliott Springs had added the wing "and extended the grounds to the new road recently built from Fort Mill to Buster Boyd Bridge. The grounds now contain a tennis court, an airplane landing field, and a swimming pool fed from two springs."[81]

A number of tenant houses on the farms housed farm workers and house-servants.[82] A

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[80]Elliott White Springs papers, South Caroliniana Library. The household expenses, including the furnishings for the new wing, totaled $13,708.37 in 1939.

[81]*Lancaster News*, March of Progress Edition, March 1940.

[82]Wyatt Gibson estimates there were ten tenant houses on the Springs Farm in 1950.

Hungarian gardener looked after the grounds.[83] There was a gun room in the basement. Wyatt Gibson left his mill job in 1950 to train bird dogs for Elliott Springs and had a key to the gun room so that he could clean the guns between the frequent hunting trips. Also in the basement was a room with a Cary Safe that served as a wine cellar.

In the 1920s and 1930s Elliott and Frances Springs hosted many parties in the White Homestead. Few of the guests were local. Most were from Charlotte or the New York area. Literary guests included Carl Sandburg, Julia Peterkin, and Samuel Hopkins Adams. Of all the celebrities who stayed at the Homestead, no one got more publicity than Gypsy Rose Lee, who was hired to unveil the newly constructed Springs-owned Lancaster and Chester Railroad depot in 1951.

In the winter of 1953 Colonel Springs made plans for a combination greenhouse and swimming pool. He had tried tropical fish in a large aquarium without success and despaired of raising fish. He first turned his interest toward tropical plants, saying that he would start small and add to. He admitted he

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[83]*The Herald* (Rock Hill, S. C.), May 18, 1991, interview with Anne S. Close.

had a lot to learn and began writing nurseries and horticultural experts. By spring "The Colonel" had determined that he would have an indoor swimming pool with tropical plants and citrus trees planted in tubs around the pool.[84] The greenhouse is 35 by 60 feet with a 19 foot ceiling. There is automatic ventilation at the top and manual ventilators on the side.

The huge swimming pool was tiled in the summer of 1953. Springs used the diving board of the Andrea Doria, a luxury ocean liner, as the model for his diving board.[85] A large red-tile octopus and red-tile crabs adorn the bottom of the pool. The Nataborium (a coined word combining natatorium and arboretum) was built with at least two objects in view besides providing an indoor pool for his grandchildren to romp in. In the near future Springs was hosting the Southern R. R. Board members[86]

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[84]The first order for plants included kumquats, tangerines, King orange, temple orange, Ponderosa lemon, lime, grapefruit, tangelo and palms, banana tree, hibiscus, avocado, papayas, etc. Correspondence in the Elliott White Springs collection, South Caroliniana Library.

[85]For details see Burke Davis, War Bird, pp. 210-211.

[86]He had a plaque made at the Springs foundry that read "Springs Nataborium, Courtesy, Southern Railway." Springs had inherited a large amount of Southern R. R. stock and sat on its board.

and he also saw the swimming pool area as an interesting background for some of his Springmaid ads.

The most famous Springmaid ads were artists' renderings of perky girls in Springmaid costumes but there were also ads using live models that were posed beside some of the Colonel's interesting automobiles, on the patio of his home, etc. The Nataborium became a new setting for models advertising Springs Cotton Mills fabrics[87].

By 1931 Elliott Springs was combining a love for bird hunting with conservation. Thirty acres was set aside with 85 plots planted with 10 bushels of wheat and 5 bushels of cane seed. The result was 20 nice coveys.

At least by 1934 and probably before, the Springs Farm was a member of the South Carolina Peach Growers Association. Peaches were shipped by rail to New York restaurants.

Springs Farm records[88] for 1942 -- a war year -- show that the equipment included a 6-cylinder 1937

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[87]War Bird devotes a chapter to Springs' precedent-breaking ad campaign, pp. 186-203. Also see Louise Pettus' The Springs Story - Our First Hundred Years, pp. 144-48.

[88]The Springs Farm records are a part of the Elliott White Springs collection in the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

Dodge truck and a 1940 John Deere tractor. Farms got special priorities ("Food will win the War!" was the slogan). The Springs Farm added a 1942 Allis Chalmers tractor and combine, a grain drill, two 2-horse wagons, a drag harrow, corn planter and four mules. Two hundred acres were planted in corn, oats, lespedeza, wheat, barley, and cane (from which he extracted 700 gallons of molasses). Four acres of sweet potatoes produced 800 bushels, and 122 acres were rented on six neighboring farms. S. W. Foster was the farm manager.

In addition, there was the 180-acre peach orchard and there were 5 acres of garden produce. Much of the garden produce was put up at the Fort Mill Cannery -- 1127 cans, mostly beans and soup. Springs Farm planted 40 acres in cotton and sharecropped 38 acres more.

In 1939 Elliott Springs invited Walt Schrader who had just arrived in York County to assist in building up the quail population on the farm. Schrader experimented with various lespedezas as a food source for quail and found lespedeza bicolor to be the best. Schrader's assessment: "Thanks to the wonderful cooperation of the Springs Farm, the quail research for the Southeast was very successful and was mainly instrumental in developing the Farm

Game Program that is generally recommended and practiced in the Southeast."

In other work on the Springs Farm, Schrader commented, "Working in cooperation with the Colonel, Mr. Gregg, and Mr. Palmer, a fine program for water fowl was developed by locating and building a system of farm ponds that were planted to develop a readily available source of food for ducks. These ponds are now also used for irrigation."[89] Around 5,000 quail were raised in pens and released for hunting each year.[90]

Springs Farm was cooperating with a conservation and soil building program before World War II mostly by adding limestone and phosphate to worn out land and seeding it with cover crop such as vetch. This practice continued during the war. In 1942, 536 acres of vetch were planted and additional fields were terraced.

In spite of the efforts to restore the soil, when Robert F. Palmer, a Clemson-trained agriculturist, was hired as manager in late 1945, he saw considerable erosion taking place on the entire farm and noted a lack of permanent pasture.

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[89]Walt Schrader, retired biologist living in Rock Hill, S. C., in a paper, "Game Management on the Springs Farm," 1991.
[90]Interview by Louise Pettus with Wyatt Gibson, May 9, 1991

The purchase of the John Scott farm in December 1945 added a new dimension. Elliott Springs bought the neighboring farm from Springs cousins along with Springfield which was built by John Springs III ca. 1804-06. A dairy barn was built and purebred Guernseys were added. Poultry barns were another addition to the Springs Farm.

In 1950 Colonel Springs wrote Robert P. Lamont in New York: "I have an orchard of 25,000 peach trees and a Guernsey dairy with about sixty Klondike and Quail Roost heifers. I am successful in losing money on both. I also have 8,000 acres of land, and about a thousand acres under cultivation in grain and peaches. . . ."[91]

In 1991 the Springs Farm acreage in Fort Mill township totaled 6,780 acres of which 1,500 acres was in pasture, hay crops and fruit trees. Peach trees numbered 13,000 on 130 acres with 22 varieties, all sold locally and all tree-ripened. Instead of dairy cattle there were herds of mixed breed cattle raised for beef. On the average a herd of 300 brood cows furnished calves that were sold to feed lots in Texas

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[91]Elliott W. Springs to Robert P. Lamont, New York City, Jan. 16, 1950, South Caroliniana Library.

or Iowa. Over time, the farm income is about half and half, peaches and beef.[92]

Close family heirs have given the Leroy Springs Co., an operating foundation, approximately 2300 acres for a greenway. The intent is to preserve the land in its natural state in so far as possible. The greenway will be used for low-impact recreation, and as a wildlife habitat and watershed protection.

In 1991 the 18,000-square-foot White Homestead was due a restoration. Elliott Springs, who died in 1959, had willed the house to the eight children of Anne and Bill Close[93]: Crandall Close Bowles, Frances Close Hart, Leroy Springs Close, Patricia Close, Elliott Springs Close, Hugh William Close, Jr., Derick Springsteen Close, and Kathrine Close Trotter.[94] They decided that the rooms of the 1831 section of the house should be restored to resemble as closely as possible the original. The original paint colors and all marbleizing and graining and wood treatments were restored. The two wing

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[92]Miller Coggins, Springs Farm manager, interview with Louise Pettus, September 18, 1991.

[93]Anne Springs and Hugh William Close were married November 23, 1946. Bill Close became president of The Springs Cotton Mills in 1959 following the death of Colonel Springs.

[94]York County Probate File #421, envelope 13097.

additions and the Nataborium area added by Colonel Springs reflect the time periods they represent but are also more comfortable with the installation of new electrical wiring, plumbing, air conditioning-heating systems, etc. One of the uses will be to serve as guest quarters for the families and friends of the Close family.[95]

In 160 years the grand old house has been much added to (now 28 rooms). But, while a mixture of time periods, there is a harmony of the whole. Most remarkably, the White Homestead has survived in spite of the disruptions of war, earthquakes, hurricanes, and an interlude of more than forty years in which there were no family occupants. Undoubtedly, the house has survived because there was someone in each generation who cared enough and had the financial ability to maintain it.

With its 1991 restoration, the White Homestead is again the most handsome example of

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[95]The restoration work was done by Yelverton Architects of Charlotte, North Carolina in cooperation with Andrew Roby, Inc. of Charlotte. Kenneth Laney supervised the work. The restoration met the requirements of the National Register of Historic Places. Morrison Brown, A.S.I.D. of Charlotte was the interior designer.

Late Georgian architecture in upcountry South Carolina.

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